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without any special significance." "Every art is at its best when it is most itself." Of art he says: "The only criterion is beauty," and of the artists' spirit he gives this account: "To be an artist simply for one's own gratification; to fashion something beautiful simply because one feels like doing it; to purify one's mind by projecting into life what is accumulated there by some curious grace of nature." That is rather an Aristotelian idiom, but one understands how there may be that way of *katharsis* as well as by pity and terror, though it is not our way.

There is, to be sure, a kind of *naïveté*, a heavenly disdain of self-consciousness, in quietly setting down a few of the truths that everybody admits and everybody ignores. And thus stated they shame the average critic. They wear an air of quite essential paradox. It may be that out of the East, by way of Whistler, is to come a new life for art, since everything hitherto, so far as we can make out, has come out of the East somewhere at some time. Mr. Hartmann himself came out of the East, and he is very interesting, but the new art, when it comes, will be bigger than his account of it, just as surely as a painting by Lin Liang is bigger than a color print by Hiroshige. "The new art will be different. It has to be different to equal the old. It will be attuned to the moods of the modern mind. It will have new accents. It will bear the analytical and complex aspects of our time. It will be subtler, more fragile, perhaps, but it will drive deeper into our souls than the cold correctness of older forms and emblems."

Probably if the influence of the East is to touch us again, it would have come just the same, to the very day and hour, without Whistler, for nobody is indispensable and nothing happens until time is for it to be, and then no presence and no absence can stay it. Probably Whistler's own genius, like his part, is not so great as this author thinks, for his seems to have been a very exquisite minor genius, not supreme, but poignant and lovely. Let us, however, give thanks for Whistler and for this author. Such books do not drop on one's table every day.

WILLIAM BLAKE. By G. K. CHESTERTON. London: Duckworth & Co. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1910.

Mr. Chesterton has written a little book on Blake for the Duckworth-Dutton series. It is prettily printed, flimsily bound, and has thirty-two pictures. These are well chosen and few of them hackneyed, but very ill-reproduced. They mostly represent a leaf out of one of Blake's books, of which the text is entirely illegible and the values swamped in the half-tone. Line engravings, etchings, woodcuts, and paintings come out all alike. The whites are gray and the blacks are gray. The author who selected the pictures is not responsible for this, but the result is none the less deplorable.

Mr. Chesterton has added nothing to the sum of human knowledge—that was hardly to be expected. Blake has been carefully edited three times, and, although the final and right book is still unwritten, it would take a long time and an able interpreter to do it. Mr. Chesterton has not even added anything to the sum of human opinion; he has merely rearranged it. It is amazing, it is really touching, as one comes to the end of the volume to see how precisely it corresponds to the simple announcement

by the publishers of what they wanted: "The Popular Library of Art planned expressly for the General Public. The publishers do not hesitate in putting forward volumes on subjects which even if handled most convincingly before are worth repeated handling from new points of view, and they trust each volume will prove a fresh and stimulating appreciation of the subject it treats." Most people who studied Blake hitherto came to the conclusion that he was not mad any more than St. Paul or Swedenborg, S. Teresa or Mrs. Piper. But about the visions they did not dogmatize, leaving every man to account according to the faith that was in him, for the spirits that taught Blake, for their objectivity or their subjectivity. So Mr. Chesterton, casting over his material, argues, delightfully: (a) That Blake was mad; (b) that the spirits were real; (c) that they were devils; (d) that Blake was not a mystic, at least not a good mystic; but this is dropped later on and Blake reappears as a mystic as persistently as the child's toy that bobs up again whenever you turn it over. Furthermore, Mr. Chesterton treats himself to various digressions. (1) That in modern men still exist the three ancient powers of Christian, Roman, and Pagan; (2) a casual defense of the eighteenth century; (3) a definition of fads and faddists; (4) that mysticism means not obscure and confused, but very clear, precise, and definite; (5) that Aubrey Beardsley is decadent and why; (6) the difference between Asiatic and Occidental mysticism—a digression quite interesting and violently unfair; (7) that God is a person palpably, "the likeness of the appearance of a man." An eighth might be added that G. K. Chesterton is a Roman Catholic, but this runs so continuously and audibly through the book that it is, strictly speaking, the main theme and Blake only a rather frequent digression. There is little to say about the little book. One might refute the four arguments, but that would be unfair. One does not argue with the man on the platform while he is drawing rabbits out of his sleeve and reels of paper from under his hat. Besides, all the arguments are made to depend upon the eighth digression, and therefore whoever disagrees with that finds them already refuted. Or one might state the substance of the other seven digressions and argue about them, but what would that have to do with Blake? They are, moreover, not constructed for argument; most of them are indisputable and the rest untenable. They make diverting reading that gently stimulates the intellectual faculties without in the least straining them. To get a like sensation the last generation read Browning to feel how mean they were and how good it was to be big and brave. The present generation reads Chesterton and glows with intellectual agility.

On page 92 Mr. Chesterton offers a quotation in proof of Blake's lack of humor and proved madness. Mr. Chesterton finds the couplet intrinsically absurd.

"He who the ox to wrath hath moved
Shall never be by woman loved."

But the couplet is not absurd; it is direct and true. An ox is ridiculous to Mr. Chesterton, but surely an ox is not ridiculous to God. It is, on the contrary, patient, silent, strong, and meek. Whatever brute could torture that infinitely gentle creature into anger could not know love nor even become the base object of love that has sufficed so many wretched women. The couplet is no proof of madness, only of depth. It would almost seem

that not to understand that is proof of brutality. One is very sorry the author found Gilbertian absurdity here; such an accessibility to laughter is deplorable. Again, in the face of the *Man who Built the Pyramids*, Mr. Chesterton would conceive a face "swarthy and secret, ponderous, lowering, staring, or tropical or Apollonian (misspelled) and pure," and he does not like Blake's picture of him. But if it is true, as archæologists tell us, that the pyramids were built under the whip on bread and leaks, and that the king had an inexhaustible supply of time and human lives and, so far as he could, used up both, perhaps he did have the face of an evil idiot. Again, Blake may have thought longer and seen straighter than Mr. Chesterton.

THE NEW LAOKOON: AN ESSAY ON THE CONFUSION OF ARTS. By IRVING BABBITT. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1910.

"There is no excellent beauty that hath not some strangeness in the proportion," said Bacon, and the kernel of the nut is the whole world of romanticism. In the same brief essay on Beauty—it is just a page and a half long in Pickering's edition—he set another phrase even more pregnant and more surprising: "For no youth can be comely but by pardon and considering the youth so as to make up the comeliness." There are times when we try to consider a sort of youth so as to make up the pardon. Here comes a book called *The New Laokoon: an Essay on the Confusion of the Arts*. It is a curiously young book; despite the author's maturity, the book is young in its cocksureness, in its ingenuous display of a bit of out-of-the-way learning, in its employment of the question-begging and libelous epithet, in its naïve and rather silly contempt for women, its irrelevant apology for religion, its abuse of the logical devices, and its want of the essential logic of fair play. It is young to be so evidently more interested in oneself than in ideas. The subtitle begs the whole question. The main title must be a magnificent bit of effrontery, since it cannot stand for paucity of invention. The new Laokoon should be better than the old and Mr. Babbitt a bigger man than Lessing. But the book, though serious and earnest, is in no wise illuminated or stamped by genius. The author must have got up his seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century critics very carefully, but he has nothing to add to them by way of making them come alive, as criticism sometimes does. He has sorted out a little terminology to use, as the late Matthew Arnold said, "in my sense of the word"; but, unfortunately, the definitions are not indexed and not easy to find, and no one would accept the paragraph on page 110 as a just definition of romanticism, and for the curious and unlikely use of *humanism* one is referred to another of the author's books. Mr. Babbitt uses "lower" and "higher," "above" and "below" the reason, light-heartedly, but who is to determine the point from which the measurement is to be taken, himself or the genius who has stirred his spleen? He reasons in such terms as "wholesome," "subliminal," "evidence of hyperæsthesia," "the neurotic school." But thereby he commits *non sequitur*. Medicine and æsthetics cannot make a syllogism between them. He condemns by unmistakable implication (on page 12) the sort of man to whom *dago* and *chink* are epithets of contempt, not mere generalization of racial affinities wider than nationality, but he himself uses the word feminine to stand for an "integral corruption of the higher parts of human nature" (page 236).